

## **Basic Facts about VX**

### **Background**

- ▼ VX was originally developed in the United Kingdom in the early 1950s, and was given to the United States for military development.
- ▼ VX is a nerve agent. A nerve agent is a compound that is designed to kill people by binding up a compound known as acetylcholinesterase (the body's off switch), this compound is essential for removing acetylcholine, the body's voluntary muscle and gland "on switch." With reduced or no acetylcholinesterase, the glands and voluntary muscles continue to be stimulated by the acetylcholine; eventually the muscles tire and can no longer sustain breathing functions.
- ▼ VX is considered to be at least 100 times more toxic by entry through the skin, than Sarin (GB) and twice as toxic by inhalation.

### **Risk**

- ▼ VX is lethal. It can enter the body by inhalation, ingestion, through the eyes, and through the skin.
- ▼ VX is extremely persistent, when dispersed heavily, it can persist for long periods under average weather conditions. In very cold conditions, VX can persist for months. It evaporates at least 1,500 times slower than water.

### **Symptoms**

- ▼ Symptoms may appear in varying order based on route of exposure (the way it entered the body), but commonly noted symptoms include:

Runny nose

Watery eyes

Drooling and excessive sweating

Tightness of the chest

Difficulty in breathing

Dimness of vision (pupils may become pinpointed)

Nausea

Vomiting, cramps, and loss of bladder/bowel control

Twitching, jerking, and staggering

Headache, confusion, drowsiness, coma, and convulsions

### **Decontamination**

- ▼ Skin: Remove contaminated clothing and wash skin with large amounts of soap and water or 5% liquid household bleach. Rinse well with water. VX absorbs slowly through the skin, but is extremely toxic by this route of entry.
- ▼ If you believe that you have gotten VX in your eyes, immediately flush your eyes with water for 10 - 15 minutes. VX absorbs rapidly into the eyes, reportedly at least 100 times faster than Sarin.
- ▼ If you believe that you have eaten or drank something with VX on it or in it, do not induce vomiting.

### **Treatment**

- ▼ If you believe that you have been exposed to VX, you first should remove the agent from the skin and call 911. Ambulance teams and hospitals in many communities are stocking the antidotes.